

REMARKS

This reply is filed in response to the final rejection dated June 13, 2003, with a Request for Continued Examination under 37 CFR §1.114.

The amendments to claims 1, 5, 6, 14, 21, 25, 29, 40, and 41, are intended to more clearly claim the invention with respect to the prior art cited. In that regard, the prior art cited does not show at least the following features in the context of this invention:

- Clip that hold the end portions of a loop between the clip and the food casing;
- Conveying surface that may be enlarged and reduced by retracting and extending the conveying surface length without changing conveying surfaces;
- A conveying belt defining a conveying surface, the conveying surface adapted to have a variable length without replacement of the conveying belt;
- Clip that draws the loop to the casing and holds the loop to the food casing at two or more points along the loop;
- Blowing the secured together end portions of the string loop into the entry channel; and
- Slacker idler rollers beneath a conveying surface of the belt that are adapted to permit the length of the conveying surface to be extended and retracted to extend and reduce a space between the clipping device and the conveying surface without replacement of the conveyor belt.

In particular, Kollross only shows a loop being clipped at one point along the loop. Also, Kollross only shows a loop being held opposite the end portions.

In particular, Whittlesey only shows a conveyor that may be adjusted to fit differing sizes of conveyor belts. The idler roller of Whittlesey will not allow for the extension and retraction of the conveyor surface without a change in the conveyor belt because there is no means for

maintaining the tension in an acceptable range if the idler rollers were moved. Whittlesey discloses a conveyor with two rollers. If the rollers are moved to retract the conveyor surface the belt would slip. If the rollers were moved to extend the conveying surface the belt would prevent the movement or break.

In particular, Gammon does not disclose an air source that blows the loop. Gammon discloses a mechanical means for securing string wrap that is pneumatically driven.

In particular, Plewa does not disclose an air source that blows the loop. Plewa uses an air source as a signal.

In particular, Duroyon does not disclose clip cycle times, only slacking times. Slacking times are only a portion of clip cycle times.

In particular, Hardy discloses a "conveyor handling system for batching regularly arriving articles or article collations into groups and intermittently discharging the groups". The examiner has provided no motivation to combine this reference with the other references cited. Furthermore, Hardy was published in October of 1980, nearly 23 years ago and there is no evidence that similar technology has been used in the field of the invention in the last 23 years.

In light of the above arguments at least independent claims 1, 21, 25, 40, and 41 are allowable. The remaining claims depend from these independent claims and are therefore allowable as well.

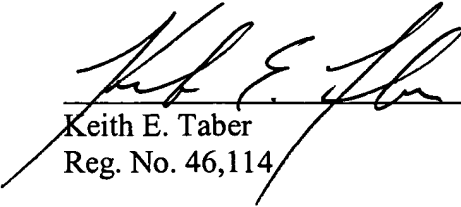
Applicant : Thomas R. Stanley et al.
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Applicant believes that no fees are due for excess claims or for an extension of time as the number of pending claims has been reduced in this action and the response is timely filed. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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Keith E. Taber
Reg. No. 46,114

Fish & Richardson P.C.
5000 Bank One Center
1717 Main Street
Dallas, Texas 75201
Telephone: (214) 292-4035
Facsimile: (214) 747-2091